



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 1 August 2025

by **J Hobbs MRTPI MCD BSc (hons)**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 4 September 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/W0530/W/25/3364148

Station Yard, High Street, Meldreth, Cambridgeshire SG8 6JR

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Mr Duncan Vercoe against the decision of South Cambridgeshire District Council.
 - The application Ref is 24/02509/FUL.
 - The development proposed is demolition of existing factory building and office and construction of 22no. dwellings with associated landscaping.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The description of development in the banner above is duplicated from the Application Form. However, I have removed reference to "... (resubmission following withdrawal of application 23/02578/FUL)" as this does not refer to an act of development.

Main Issues

3. The main issues are:
 - the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area; and,
 - whether the proposed development would provide appropriate living conditions for future occupiers of plots 21 and 22, with particular regard to privacy.

Reasons

Character and appearance

4. The appeal site comprises of previously developed land, located at one end of the village of Meldreth. Only glimpsed views of the site are available from Station Road, through the thick vegetation, and over it when travelling across the nearby bridge. The appeal site has a strong verdant boundary which provides an important setting to the edge of the village.
5. Notwithstanding this, when viewed from the site entrance on High Street and from Railway Close, the appeal site has an urban character due to the presence of a warehouse, a significant amount of hardstanding, and the utilitarian boundary treatments. Moreover, the appeal site borders the railway line and an apartment block. As such, the appeal site is in an area of transition between urban development surrounding the railway and the countryside beyond the village.

6. As part of the proposal a large Black Walnut tree and a Leyland Cypress hedge would be removed from the site's boundary with Station Road. Although these trees are either low quality or of a condition such that they cannot be retained as living trees, their removal would significantly reduce the extent of the site's verdant boundary. The Proposed Boundary Treatment Plan¹ and Detailed Landscape Proposals² show that the vegetation would be replaced with a 1.5m high timber close boarded fence with a trellis on top and along part of the boundary a replacement hedge. Nonetheless, as a result of the development, the verdant boundary along Station Road behind plots 8-10 would only be replaced by fencing. This long section of fencing would appear incongruous within the street scene and would harmfully disrupt the important verdant boundary.
7. The appellant contends that a landscaping condition could be attached to any planning permission which would ensure that a satisfactory landscaping scheme could be implemented. However, there would be no space for additional planting without reducing the size of the plots, which could not be achieved via condition.
8. The proposed density of the development would be high given its edge of village location. Only a modest amount of landscaping is proposed alongside a small area of public open space. Nevertheless, when viewed from the site's entrance the proposed development would assimilate with the urban development surrounding the railway, which is distinct from the rest of the village. Moreover, the removal of the warehouse and hardstanding would be a benefit which partially offsets the modest amount of landscaping.
9. The proposal would also include a significant amount of off street parking. However, most of the parking would be to the side of the proposed dwellings and would be interspersed with landscaping. As such, it would not be overly prominent, nor would it confuse the coherence or legibility of the proposed development. In particular, the parking around the site's entrance would be well screened by vegetation and the alignment of the access road.
10. I acknowledge that the front outlook of some of the proposed dwellings would be dominated by car parking, of particular concern are plots 12 and 16. Nonetheless, around most of the parking would be some form of landscaping which would soften its appearance. Whilst the front outlook of these plots would not be ideal, it would not be materially harmful.
11. I conclude that the proposal would have a harmful effect on the character and appearance of the area. It would be contrary to policies S/7 and HQ/1 of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan, September 2018 (LP). These policies indicate that redevelopment of unallocated land will be permitted provided that development is of a character appropriate to the location and all new development must preserve the character of the area, amongst other matters. The proposal would also not be in accordance with paragraph 135 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) where it advises that planning decisions should ensure that developments are sympathetic to local character, amongst other matters.

¹ Drawing No A22-089-PL103 Revision E

² Drawing No 4007/1 Revision F

Living conditions

12. Plots 21 and 22 would be in proximity to the neighbouring apartment block, Victoria Place. Plot 22 would extend along the site boundary with Victoria Place and Plot 21 would be its immediate neighbour on the other side.
13. The proposed boundary treatment along the site's border would restrict views of Plot 22's rear garden from ground floor apartments. Nonetheless, first floor apartments would have unrestricted views of Plot 22's entire rear garden from a short distance. Whilst some overlooking of rear gardens would be expected in a suburban area, this would only be expected from windows which offer an oblique view and not of the whole garden. Whereas occupiers of the first floor apartments would have direct views over the entire garden, including the patio area immediately to the rear of the proposed dwelling, where a higher level of privacy would be expected.
14. The appellant has highlighted that the first floor windows within Victoria Place serve two bedrooms, a study, and a kitchen and that these are not examples of main living space. However, the bedrooms and study are habitable rooms and there is no control on internal space; therefore, those rooms may be converted in the future. Similarly, the appellant has indicated that there would be limited views of the garden by people sat down and that future buyers would be aware of the situation before purchasing the property. None of these factors would sufficiently mitigate the harm caused by the proposed relationship between the rear garden and Victoria Place, and the lack of privacy that would be created by the entire garden being overlooked.
15. With regard to Plot 21, there would be sufficient separation, and an additional fence would partially screen views of the rear garden from Victoria Place's first floor apartment's windows. Consequently, occupiers of Plot 21 would not be overlooked to a harmful extent.
16. I note that the Design Officer has indicated that there would be some incidental overlooking between Victoria Place and plots 21 and 22 but that this would not raise their concerns about privacy for the residents in this regard. Nonetheless, this is a subjective assessment and for the reasons given above I conclude that the relationship with Plot 22 is unacceptable.
17. Overall, the proposed development would not provide appropriate living conditions for future occupiers of Plot 22, with particular regard to privacy, but it would for future occupiers of Plot 21. The proposal would be contrary to LP Policy HQ/1 where it indicates that proposals must protect the amenity of occupiers. It would also be contrary to paragraph 135 of the Framework where it indicates that planning decisions should ensure that developments create places with a high standard of amenity for future users.

Other Matters

18. The weight given to consultation responses varies on a number of aspects, including the level of detail and relevance to the proposal subject to the appeal. I have reviewed the consultation responses made prior to the determination of the planning application and following the submission of the appeal. They have formed the basis of my assessment, alongside the representations made by the appellant and the Council and my observations during my site visit. I also note the appellant

has raised concerns with the conduct of the Council during the determination of the planning application. This is a matter between the parties and has not altered my assessment on the acceptability of the appeal proposal.

19. A certified copy of an executed Planning Obligation Deed has been provided. I conclude that the obligation is legally sound. If permission were granted the obligation would come into force. It would lead to the appellant paying a contribution toward ambulance infrastructure, children's play space, footpath improvements, green infrastructure, increasing clinical capacity at the nearby GP surgery, providing household waste receptacles, and improving community and sport facilities, subject to specific triggers. It would also secure a biodiversity net gain and ensure this is monitored and managed, as well as securing the provision of public open space.
20. Beyond the benefits secured through the planning obligation, the proposal would also make an efficient use of the land, provide housing in an accessible location, assist the Council with maintaining a five year supply of deliverable housing land, and provide electric vehicle charging points. Furthermore, the proposal would be in general accordance with sections 4, 5, 8, 9 11, 14 and 15 of the Framework and would comply with several local plan policies listed with the appellant's Appeal Statement. Nonetheless, these benefits do not outweigh the harm identified above.
21. There is a dispute between the parties whether a previous planning permission³ for development of the appeal site is extant. Even if the permission is extant, the previously permitted development is materially different to the proposal before me with regard to its design, and its relationship with Victoria Place. Therefore, it does not set a precedent.
22. It is not clear whether the appeal site forms part of the Council's supply of deliverable housing land. Even if it does and the appeal site does not meet the definition of deliverable as set out in the Framework, there is no substantive evidence before me that this would mean that the Council cannot demonstrate a five year supply of deliverable housing land. Therefore, the provision in paragraph 11(d) of the Framework does not apply in this instance.

Conclusion

23. The proposal conflicts with the development plan, when read as a whole, and the material considerations do not indicate that the appeal should be decided other than in accordance with it. Therefore, the appeal should be dismissed.

J Hobbs

INSPECTOR

³ Planning Permission Ref. S/1502/17/FL